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Ministers promote safety of young workers and prevention of violence in the workplace

Fredericton, New Brunswick, January 26, 2007— At their annual meeting, Ministers responsible for Labour underscored their commitment to the promotion of safety of young workers and prevention of violence in the workplace.

The meeting, which began on January 25th and concludes today, was co-hosted by the Honourable Jean-Pierre Blackburn, Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, and the Honourable Edward Doherty, Minister of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour and Minister Responsible for the Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat for the Province of New Brunswick.

"A safe and healthy workplace is a productive one that is good for workers, employers and the economy. The accident rate among the young is especially high and more must be done to help these workers," said Minister Blackburn. "Furthermore, Canadian workers shouldn't have to worry about violence on the job and as Ministers we will work with the stakeholders to eliminate this workplace threat."

"As the Minister responsible for labour in New Brunswick, I am pleased to have co-hosted such a significant Minister's Meeting," said Doherty. "It is important to foster a safe and welcoming work environment for our country's workers. Through this collaborative approach, we are able to share best practices to help reduce accidents and violence that sometimes occur in the workplace."

In 2005, 1097 Canadians died as a result of work-related causes and another 337,930 work-related injuries and illnesses were reported. In addition to the human suffering caused by workplace accidents, the total of compensation paid out to victims, and other related costs, is estimated to be over $8 billion. Accident and injury rates are highest among young workers.

With this in mind, Ministers expressed special concern about the health and safety of young workers in Canada. A joint statement on the importance of health and safety education was unanimously endorsed by Ministers. Through this statement, the Ministers aim within their respective responsibilities to promote the inclusion of health and safety awareness and training in elementary, secondary and post-secondary educational institutions; to encourage partnerships among government departments and agencies responsible for education and occupational health and safety; and to foster greater inter-ministerial cooperation in these areas. This step is a follow-up on commitments Ministers made in March 2006 in Whistler, B.C. when they adopted a joint statement emphasizing the importance and benefits that healthy workplaces bring to Canadian society.

Ministers also discussed Canada's international labour activities and labour standards, including the recently completed review of federal labour standards headed by Professor Harry Arthurs.

The Ministers responsible for Labour meet every year to share experiences and promote cooperation among labour jurisdictions in Canada. Throughout the year, ongoing work continues through the Canadian Association of Administrators of Labour Legislation (CAALL).

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Federal, Provincial and Territorial Ministers Responsible for Labour

Statement on the Integration of Occupational Health and Safety Concepts and Competencies into Education and Training

The integration of concepts and competencies in the area of OHS has been a subject of interest both in Canada and abroad. For example:

In 2003, the International Section on Education and Training for Prevention of the International Social Security Association (ISSA) adopted a Protocol for the integration of occupational health and safety competencies into vocational and technical education and training (referred to as the Québec City Protocol).

In 2006, the International Labour Organization (ILO) adopted international instruments establishing a promotional framework for occupational health and safety, which recommends a more effective integration of occupational health and safety concepts and competencies into vocational education and training programs.

The federal, provincial and territorial Ministers Responsible for Labour have noted that preventing work accidents and occupational illness among young Canadians is a priority of their respective governments and that education plays a crucial role in raising awareness about occupational health and safety issues among youth.

The provincial and territorial governments promote education as a means of informing elementary and high school students about occupational accident and illness prevention.

In 2006, the Ministers Responsible for Labour adopted a Statement on Healthy Workplaces, which in particular provided for promoting awareness of the ties between work and health.

In 2006, the Ministers Responsible for Labour also recognized that the youth of today represent the

workforce of tomorrow and acknowledge that introducing into education and training sound occupational health and safety concepts and competencies at a young age will develop a culture that views healthy and safe workplaces as the standard.

In this favourable Canadian and international context,the federal, provincial and territorial Ministers Responsible for Labour:

1. Note
   - That preventing workplace injuries and occupational illness among young Canadians is a key objective of their respective governments;
   - That education delivered to students by teachers plays a crucial role in raising awareness about occupational health and safety issues among youth;

2. Acknowledge that the Québec City Protocol is a partnership model that holds promise for the future, notably by applying the following principles to education and training:
   - the acquisition of occupational health and safety competencies throughout the learning path, including within practicum placements;
   - regular evaluation of those competencies within the education system;
   - the need for occupational health and safety best practices, notably the sharing of information and experiences among governments;
   - the material, equipment and environment are in compliance with occupational health and safety regulatory and other pertinent standards.

3. Confirm their intention to strengthen their support for Canada's international leadership in the area of occupational health and safety.

As part of their respective governmental responsibilities, the provincial and territorial Ministers Responsible for Labour agree to:

1. Promote the effective integration of occupational health and safety concepts and competencies where appropriate, through elementary, secondary and post-secondary education system, and training;
2. Foster interministerial cooperation in this matter;
3. Encourage partnerships among the government departments or agencies responsible for occupational health and safety and the government departments or agencies responsible for formal education and training.

January 25, 2007

Front row (left to right): Minister Laurent Lessard, Quebec; Minister Iris Evans, Alberta; Minister Edward Doherty, New Brunswick; Federal Minister Jean Pierre Blackburn; Minister Olga Ilich, British Columbia; Minister Glenn Hart, Yukon.

Back row (left to right): Minister David Forbes, Saskatchewan; Minister Steve Peters, Ontario; Mr. Andrew Swan (representing Minister Nancy Allan), Manitoba; Minister Mark Parent, Nova Scotia; Minister Charles Dent, Northwest Territories; Minister Elmer MacFadyen, Prince Edward Island.

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All times are reflected in Atlantic time
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